

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Playtex (Vega Baja)

Puerto Rico Manufacturing Extension Inc

An Organized Workspace Helps Improve Productivity At Playtex Corporation

Client Profile:

Playtex Corporation, a manufacturer of brassieres, is located in Dorado, Puerto Rico and employs 402 people. The company is owned by Sara Lee, a U.S. multinational company, which has opened a total of six plants in Puerto Rico since 1960.

Situation:

Playtex's strap cutting and delivery area was experiencing delays, resulting in a production bottleneck. The area was poorly organized and the space had excessive work-in-process (WIP) inventory on the shop floor. Line operators had to wait for material handlers to provide needed parts; material handlers couldn't find parts in the extensive clutter on the shop floor. The company needed to improve this situation, and called in Puerto Rico Manufacturing Extension, Inc. (PRiMEX), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for assistance.

Solution:

PRiMEX suggested a 5S kaizen blitz as a first-phase activity. This activity applies the five "S" principles of sorting, straightening, shining, standardizing, and sustaining to the production area and its storage space. The process not only eliminates waste and clutter immediately, it also allows employees to develop standardized procedures for maintaining order. Playtex formed a team of employees from various departments, who received PRiMEX training in the basic concepts of lean manufacturing and the more specific activities of 5S. Following their training, Playtex employs got to work implementing the techniques they'd learned. As a result, they drastically reduced the amount of WIP on the floor, improved productivity, and eliminated the bottleneck in production. With operations running smoothly once again, employee stress is significantly reduced and morale is much higher throughout the facility.

Results:

Increased production from 105 packages to 135 per team per shift--a 28 percent improvement.

Reduced work-in-process by 88 percent.

Eliminated excess materials from production area, thereby creating a safer place to work.

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Improved employee morale.

Testimonial:

“After implementing [Puerto Rico Manufacturing Extension, Inc.'s] 5S, the working area radically changed to a more comfortable and safer place to work. It is now completely organized, making it possible to comply with the production requirements.”

Luis Yamil Martin, Plant Engineer